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January 24, 2005

V CORPS AIR DEFENDERS BECOME FIRST TO EARN CERTIFICATION IN FORM OF HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

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VILSECK, Germany — Soldiers from V Corps' 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade became the first unit in U.S. Army Europe to be certified as instructors in a new form of hand-to-hand combat called Modern Army Combatives.



SPC MICHAEL J. TAYLOR

In the Giebelstadt (Germany) Army Airfield gymnasium, Staff Sgt. Mark Dominik referees a match during the tournament portion of a five-day Modern Army Combatives course for Soldiers of V Corps' 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade earlier this month. The course provided the brigade with the first troops in U.S. Army Europe to be certified as instructors in the new form of hand-to-hand combat.

Thirty-five Soldiers from throughout the brigade were selected to participate in the five-day, "train-the-trainer" program that certified them to train the new techniques to other Soldiers in their units.

The Soldiers were trained by a combatives team from Fort Bliss, Texas.

"Fort Bliss has an actual 'combatives schoolhouse,' where Soldiers from all over the United States come on temporary duty ... to train and become combative certified," said Capt. Matthew W. Dalton, a volunteer Modern Army Combatives instructor.

"The program, which was initiated by the Chief of Staff of the Army, is expected to be taught to all Soldiers throughout the Army," said Sgt. 1st Class Xavier L. Whitehead, combatives course manager.

The 40-hour level one course taught the trainees dominant body positions; how to break a dominant body position; how to manipulate an opponent with body force; proper stand-up techniques; submissions, and how to escape from certain submissions.

"A lot of different martial arts and self-defense programs show people what to do from a standing position," said Whitehead. "This is the only program I know of in the Army that shows them what to do on the ground, how to get up from the ground, how to take your enemy down, and how to dominate your enemy with submission."

"Due to different rules of engagement, sometimes Soldiers are not going to have the ability to use their weapons. It is shown that nine out of 10 fights end up on the ground within anywhere from five to seven seconds, so this training is beneficial," he said.

"At the end of the course, the trainees had to take a written exam and a practical exam to show that they were capable of performing and instructing other individuals these techniques," said Dalton.

Following the exams, the trainees competed against each other in a tournament to test their newfound skills, he added.

"It's a rigorous course. It's not to be taken lightly, and it's not for the faint of heart," said Pfc. Daniel L. Silva, from 5th Battalion, 7th ADA, who won the lightweight class competition.

Sgt. Lamine Fall, from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 69th ADA Brigade, won the heavyweight class competition.

"Out of the original 35 students who started the course, only 30 made it through the course," said Whitehead.

"Everyone who participates doesn't get certified just for showing up," said Dalton.

"They have to demonstrate that they know and can teach others what they know about the training."

"This training is the chief of staff's guidance, and is now an Army policy. It's something that all Soldiers need to learn," said Whitehead. "My hope is that commanders out there will support the program and continue to send their Soldiers for certification."

